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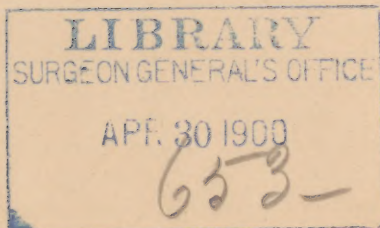
AUTHOR'S REPRINT

Asthma

Etiology and Treatment

BY J. W. HUNTER, M. D.

[Member of American Medical Association, Mississippi Valley Medical Association,
Texas State Medical Association, Central Texas Medical
Association, and Waco Medical Society.]





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For one to become convinced that there does not exist a consensus of opinion among medical men regarding the etiology of asthma, he has only to read standard authors upon the subject. All writers agree that there is a neurotic element. Some writers say that it is a true neurosis, that there is a spasm of the bronchial muscles; others say, instead of such spasm, there exists pneumogastric or vaso-motor innervation, resulting in turgescence of the bronchial mucous membrane. Williams advocated the neurotic theory, based upon experimentation, and many have accepted the theory he advanced.

When Traub wrote of hyperæmia, Clark of diffused hypermic swelling, and Webber of vaso-motor turgescence, many accepted the theories of these masters in medicine; still, other theories have been advanced, in order to reconcile certain cases to certain causes, which were observed, and which were apparently absolute factors in the development of special cases. So various are the causes that have been brought forward as conducive to the development of asthma that classifications have been formulated, which cover, or will admit most of the factors claimed by various observers, not excluding the theory of Haig that the causative factor is uric acid in the blood and the high arterial tension it produces. Modern classification, based upon the theories already advanced, is divided into the direct and the indirect, the former referring to existing causes acting directly upon the bronchial mucosa, and the latter, which is indirect, by a more circuitous route through the blood or nervous system. Among the direct causes we find placed, dust, chemical vapors, animal emanations, etc. Among the indirect causes we find first, through the nervous system (centric-excitomotor); second, indirect through the blood by gout, syphilis, skin diseases, renal diseases, etc., and last, but not least, the uric acid theory which I present to you to-day, and which I shall endeavor to sustain by reference to personal observation as well as the observations of many professional friends whom I have endeavored to interest in the subject.

* Read before Central Texas Medical Association at Hillsboro, Texas, on the 11th of January, 1898.

Three years ago I read a paper before the State Medical Association of Texas, and urged attention to uric acid as a potent factor, if it was not indeed the main or principal cause of asthma, and suggested a certain line of treatment, based upon the theory advanced. The paper referred to was the first one in America in which this theory was advocated solely as the etiological factor of the disease. 'Tis true that Dr. Conklin, of Michigan, had presented to the Medical Society of his State a paper upon the uric acid diathesis, and incidentally referred to the subject of asthma, in which paper he quoted from Haig. Of this paper however I had no knowledge until after I had given my paper to the profession, as my information came through Dr. Conklin himself, who kindly sent me a copy of his paper after seeing mine. To Dr. Hicks of San Antonio, Texas, I accorded the credit of having suggested to me the uric acid theory of asthma, and before he or I either had seen any literature upon the subject. Dr. Hicks related to me these facts, which led to the conclusions already stated: after treating two cases of asthma for two years with unsatisfactory results, he placed the patients on a prescription of 1 grain of caffeine, 5 grains carbonate of lithia, and 10 grains each of bi-carbonate of potash and soda, dispensed in granular effervescent form, and known to the profession as "Alkalithia." Having gotten the history of rheumatic gout previous to the asthma, he was induced to put the patient on this treatment. On the theory that uric acid caused the rheumatic gout, he put them on this treatment simply as a means of diagnosis, but, to his utter astonishment, he cured his cases. Dr. Hicks' revelation to me induced me to think and investigate the subject, and to call the attention of my professional friends throughout the State to the remedy, and to urge trial of the treatment so highly successful in the hands of Dr. Hicks. In less than three months, fifty odd physicians in the State were treating asthmatic cases on the uric acid theory, and by the medicinal means—Alkalithia—to which their attention had been directed. Many of these physicians were kind enough to give me memoranda of the results occurring under their observation, which were so gratifying and successful, that I conceived it a duty due to the profession and suffering asthmatics to bring the facts before the profession, and without ever having seen any literature upon the subject, began the preparation of the paper already referred to, and which was read at the State Medical Association at Dallas, in 1895. I selected ten average cases, eight successful and two unsuccessful, from the report of the fifty cases. I have followed the history of four of these eight cases, and up to this writing, now nearly three years,

these cases have remained free from asthmatic seizures. Dr. Momand, of Dallas, one of the four cases referred to, and who had been an asthmatic for fifty years, said to me at the meeting of the North Texas Medical Association last month in Dallas, that he had not had an attack of asthma in nearly three years. The distinguished surgeon Dr. H. W. Brown, of Waco, had treated two of the four cases in persons of old men, asthma complicated with rheumatism, and who are now living in Waco, and have had no return of the disease since treatment. Dr. Marvin L. Graves told me a few days ago of a case cured by this treatment nearly three years ago, and no return. I could refer to many cases benefited or cured by the adoption of a therapy properly selected, which was based upon the theory so ably advocated by Haig, his predecessors and successors. We have other diseases besides asthma, doubtless, based upon the uric acid diathesis, occurring independently or in alternation with asthma, as rheumatism, eczema, Reynaud's disease, psoriasis, pyorrhea alveolaris, nephritic, cystic, urethral, and other disorders, which when treated upon the uric acid theory with Alkalithia give good results. 'Tis true there have been failures; we have no specifics in our armamentarium; but fewer failures would have resulted, I am satisfied, had the cases been properly differentiated, or had the treatment been continued a sufficient length of time.

Now, gentlemen, I present these facts in order to open the discussion of the causation and treatment of asthma. I present only one theory, which I place in the indirect class of the modern classification I have given. I have said nothing of the various remedies suggested for the treatment of asthma, as the many text-books teach, and many gentlemen here resort to, who have no experience with the treatment based upon the uric acid theory, and the arterial tension therewith connected. I could give plausible theories, with the assistance of Haig, to show you that many cases of asthma, supposed to be due to causes in the direct class, could reasonably be considered in a chemical and physio-chemical sense as adding to the indirect cause by aiding in the increase of uric acid in the blood. I have referred you for treatment to only one combination as having been used in the treatment based upon the uric acid theory, that of caffeine, lithia, potash and soda, as above. Now, it is well established that when these agents are given in conjunction with a solution of carbonic acid, better results will be had, and as the physician in his office, nor the druggist in his store, is rarely prepared to add an effervescent property to your prescription in candor and honesty, I direct your attention to the combination, ready for administration, and

known as Alkalithia, and upon which combination, and under which name, the cases here referred to were treated, and with the same remedy many cases are now being treated by intelligent physicians throughout the length and breadth of our country.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. W. E. Menefee, Cleburne.—Mr. President, I have not thought about asthma for a long while; in fact, I don't think I know much about it. I have treated quite a number of cases of asthma with quite a number of remedies; I might say I have cured quite a number of cases, but they have never remained cured. In fact, I regard asthma as more of a condition than a real disease, and^o often an attack of asthma is brought on by some complication. I have tried the doctor's Alkalithia treatment in several instances—I don't know whether I tried it sufficiently or not—and after some time the patients would get tired of it, and probably the next time they would have asthma I would resort to something else. They would get over it, and then have asthma again. I have never cured a case that remained cured, and now I have got so when I am called to a case of asthma I study the surroundings of that patient and try to find out what has brought on the asthma, and remove the cause if possible. Sometimes I do it with one thing and sometimes with another, and sometimes the patient gets well for the present, but as to curing a case of asthma and having that case remain cured, I have never done so yet; and I don't think I have ever treated a case of asthma that the patient didn't continue to have asthma occasionally. I have one patient in my practice now whom I have recently treated for what I would term bronchial asthma; we treat it as a common cold, and in a few days the asthma disappears and the patient returns to health, to be again attacked at the next period, or the first time he takes a severe cold. I have one patient who in the fall of the year, when the first north winds come, always has asthma; during the first two or three northers, he will have asthma, and after they pass, he will probably go through the balance of the winter without a return of asthma, and be in perfect health before and after. So, I don't know much about asthma; I don't know what to say about it, so I believe I will stop and let the others talk it over, and probably I will learn something.

*Dr. H. W. Brown, Waco.—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, if you will allow me, an outsider, to talk, I will say that I was very glad to hear the doctor's remarks. The doctor, as it

^oEx-President Texas State Medical Association and ex-Vice-President of the American Medical Association.

occurs to me, really misunderstands, for the doctor did not mean to say that these cases were permanently cured in any instance. The cases that he refers to, that at his suggestion I treated and put under his Alkalithia treatment three or four years ago; these cases still take the Alkalithia once in a while as they feel the necessity. Of course, if it depends upon that condition of the blood described so succinctly and carefully, which I believe it does in many instances, that condition of the blood cannot be permanently changed, but is subject to all the influences and changes that the blood is ever subject to, and of course this asthma would recur under similar circumstances, with the indiscretions of diet and exposure. If the blood is loaded with the lithic or uric acids, one of the sources as mentioned, and the excretory system is able to carry it off successfully for a while, then other causes, a cold spell or a damp spell, or some other accident, lowers the vitality of the body, and of course the asthma presents itself again. I want to mention, in these two cases that Dr. Hunter refers to, these gentlemen told me but a short time ago, that it is one of the most wonderful relief remedies they have ever seen, but every once in a while they have to recur to it. I always will say that asthma cannot be cured any more than bronchitis or a bad cold or catarrh. Catarrh can be just as easily cured permanently as asthma; I never pretend to do that. But I want to say the doctor is an enthusiast upon the subject, first introduced it to my notice, and had the kindness to allow me to study Haig's work a year or two ago; but for three or four years I have abandoned medicine and tried to think as little about it as I possibly could. On that occasion however I began to investigate and think, for the sake of the sympathy I felt for some of my suffering friends, and I have tried Alkalithia in those cases, and since then in several other instances. I believe it is one of the best combinations to secure that solution of the Alkalies in the blood and thus neutralize and eliminate the uric acid therefrom. I believe Alkalithia is one of the best combinations I have ever used, and I don't think too much can be said of it in that direction. The doctor, I am sure, is one of the most careful, thorough and painstaking physicians I ever saw; he has studied the matter thoroughly, and although it might seem as if he was interested in the sale of Alkalithia, of which some have accused him, I want to exonerate him from any such charge as that, because I do know that the opinion he expresses in this paper is his sincere and honest conviction. I know, gentlemen, that he is free from that sordid sentiment and feeling that might, perhaps, under other circumstances attach to one.

I want to say that much in behalf of my old friend, because I know him, and know his kindness of feeling, and know how carefully he has investigated those subjects, and I know, too, the good effects of the remedy he suggests in the cases I have tried it in; but I don't profess to make any permanent cures; nothing of that kind. No disease of that class can be assumed to be permanently cured. That is a functional disease, a disease dependent upon a condition of the blood in the system; and if it is cured as sound as anything can be cured to-day, in a week it may recur.

Dr. Fanny Leake, of Austin.—I feel that I should like to say a few words on Dr. Hunter's paper. I am sorry that anyone should make a remark that a physician, because interested monetarily in any particular remedy, would dishonorably advance the cause of that remedy. I think the medical profession to-day the noblest on the face of the earth. There is no class of people who do so much charity, so much good to humanity, who are so running over with the milk of human kindness as the medical profession; and I do not believe we have a member who would debase and stultify himself by advocating any remedy simply for the monetary interest he had in it. I want to thank the doctor for his paper. I am of a rheumatic diathesis myself, and I have an utter abhorrence—which one, perhaps, ought not to have who practices medicine—against medicines; and our old remedies, colchicum, and so on, salicylic acid, and salicylates, etc., are very unpleasant to me. I certainly have enjoyed taking the remedy—Alkalithia—which the doctor advocates, on account of its pleasantness to take. I enjoy its effervescent taste. Even if he had a monetary interest, he would not stultify himself and the medical profession by saying anything outside of that which he knew to be true; of that I am sure. Again, I would say in regard to asthma, and the remarks about curing the disease, that I don't believe there is one of us, who after he had sat down at the table and eaten a real good Christmas dinner, would not feel that his hunger was cured for that time, although it might recur next day. So, if we had a case of chills and fever, we may cure that for the time being, but of course we are subject to it at any time, and—well, if we could cure all of them and make them stay cured, Othello's occupation would be gone. They will come back again, and that is what makes business. I want to again thank the doctor for his paper.

Dr. B. F. Smith, Hillsboro.—Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen, I do not know when I have listened to a paper with more pleasure than that read by the doctor, and the discussion that has followed. Speaking of the question of asthma, I will say at

once that I believe, as the gentlemen who discussed this paper stated, that it is a symptomatic condition; it is not a disease *per se*; and when we come to consider the uric acid diathesis, or lithiasis, it is protean in its forms and its manifestations. As the lady from Austin stated, it may manifest itself in rheumatism, in gout, in asthma, and in various other ways; we may have vasomotor disturbances; but I think the doctor's treatment is good unquestionably. However, I cannot help but believe, after we have rid the system of uric acid, if we indulge in nitrogenous elements, highly nitrogenous food, why, as a matter of course, we will have a surplus of uric acid again. Therefore, I do not believe there is any permanent remedy for asthma, but that Alkalithia is one of the best remedies that can be suggested. I would like, however, to suggest this, as a more appropriate observation in this connection, that instead of Othello's profession being gone, we may feel that Richard is himself again.

Dr. M. L. Graves, Waco.—I feel a very earnest interest in this subject, not because I possess, perhaps, the enthusiasm of Dr. Hunter, because this is somewhat a child of his own brain and not of mine; and I claim that it is a disease and not a condition. Dr. Menefee says it is a condition, but I imagine if you will ask any of the patients suffering with it they will tell you it is a disease, and a pretty severe one. It is either a disease or a symptom, and it removes itself from the class of symptoms because it has attached to itself a permanent history—a permanent clinical history. Not a permanent pathology that is yet known, I will admit, but perhaps a permanent pathology that will become known. It has, to a certain extent, a defined course, and, to a certain extent, a defined line of treatment. I do not think that Dr. Hunter maintains in his paper that asthma is universally produced by uric acid, and from my personal observation, I believe that it is only the few cases that are so produced—not the majority, but the minority of cases, that are produced by either the excess of uric acid or the disproportion between the elimination of uric acid and urea—because, gentlemen, Dr. Haig has demonstrated that there is where the trouble lies. Many a man, after a nitrogenous meal, or a course of meals, will excrete more uric acid than usual, without suffering with tonsilitis, or rheumatism, or gout, or asthma, or bronchitis, or migraine, or any of the neuroses which, perhaps, are attributable to this cause, because the normal proportion between the urea and the uric acid is kept up in their elimination. But in those cases which are produced by uric acid, I believe that the combination presented by Dr. Hunter is a very valuable one. I do not believe that the prep-

aration will cure every case of uric acid asthma—I mean to say temporarily cure it, relieve it—because we all recognize the fact that the prime conditions, the nitrogenous element, and the lack of physical exercise, which usually produce the disease or the diathesis, will come back again. Nor do I give the Alkalithia for the same reason that Dr. Leake takes it. As I understand it, she takes Alkalithia for the same reason that I like champagne, because it tastes good and has an effervescent effect. I give the Alkalithia in these cases because I believe it counteracts, or it holds in solution and dissolves the urate deposits, and facilitates, by its diuretic influence, the elimination of this uric acid from the system. I will say in connection with the case that the doctor mentioned in his paper, that I saw that case some three years ago, suffering for years with asthma, a young lady who is a seamstress. Her surroundings, and her condition and environments are the same now that they were then. She obtained only temporary relief. Upon definite analysis of the urine I found a large excess of uric acid, so much so that even when I made a test for albumen, by Heller's contact method, within twenty-four hours there would be a deposit along the line of the tube of numerous crystals of uric acid. I put this patient upon Alkalithia, but at the same time I was very careful to instruct her to let up on a meat diet and on the ingestion of nitrogenous drinks, like coffee, tea and chocolate. I don't think the Alkalithia alone is the proper treatment. If you continue to add fuel to the flames by keeping up the diet, which is the prime factor in the production of the disease, you are doing a great injury to your patient, and only offering a palliative relief at best. But if you arm the patient with advice that will enable him to keep free of your hands and the drug stores for the next ten years to come by exercise and proper dieting, and by the remedy itself, though it may be but palliative, you have done him the greatest good that it is possible for medicine to do. Now, this patient has not had asthma for three years. As I say, she has continued her sedentary occupation. She has lessened the nitrogenous input, and in addition to that she has increased the amount of exercise that she takes; and just in connection with that I want to refer to the fact that it is not only the lessening of the nitrogenous food, but the oxidizing process in assimilation given by exercise. If you oxidize all the food that the patient gets into his body, I don't care how much nitrogen you have, you will never have rheumatism, you will never have asthma, and you will never have gout. The trouble comes in the failure of oxidation in the body, so that the waste products, that is, the products of nutrition and assimilation, are not freed

from these different organs—and I believe the liver is one of the most important of them—and it accumulates there, deposits itself in the fibrous tissues, where the circulation is the minimum, and in the muscles, and, as the result of that, you have either sub-acute or acute rheumatism, or this other train of diseases, perhaps migraine or tonsilitis, or some of the others. I am glad that the doctor has presented this paper to the Association, but in connection with it the doctor should have his attention directed to the many other causes of asthma. I have given the Alkalithia to half a dozen cases where it has not done the slightest good, even with the improvement in dieting, but where the remedy will relieve one asthmatic we are conferring a valuable boon upon the sufferer. I have seen some cases where I believe the asthma is due to enlarged turbinates in the nose and reflex disturbances from that; and I want to say that if these are found out early enough, and operated upon before the foundation is laid in the system, and the habit is formed as it is in children, the patient can be permanently relieved by the removal of the large turbinates. But if you let asthma establish itself and remain in the system fifty years, where the primary cause was enlarged turbinates, I doubt if you will get relief by the removal of the turbinates. I believe asthma is a disease. It is true it is protean—possibly as much a disease as pneumonia. You don't always have the same kind of pneumonia, and you don't always, perhaps, have the same exciting cause of pneumonia. You may have catarrhal pneumonia, and croupal pneumonia, and congestive pneumonia, from passive congestion I mean, as a secondary result; but the pneumonia is there just the same, and it is a disease just the same. And you may have asthma from various causes; it may be due to a neurotic condition of the inside ear, or it may be due to enlarged turbines, or it may be the uric acid diathesis, or many of the others; but it is a disease all the same. It produces a certain train of symptoms very unpleasant to the patient, and very difficult for the doctor to relieve. And I believe that as soon as a scientific investigation is brought to bear upon these different focalizing influences that produce asthma, either as an exciting or as a primary cause, we will get a fuller knowledge of this disease, and a successful line of treatment will be effected; and I think Dr. Hunter's efforts in this direction will be productive of good, because they direct the attention of the profession to at least one of the causes, thereby permitting relief to a number of the sufferers.

Dr. Terrell.—Following upon Dr. Graves' remark, to have an attack of asthma you have to have three forces: a neurotic

tendency, an exciting cause and a focus from which the trouble starts. I call to mind three cases now, which I treated on the plan suggested by Dr. Graves, of removing the cause by dieting, etc. One of them was as long ago as five years, and I have followed her carefully, and she has not had a single attack of asthma since. The last one was six months ago.

Dr. Benbrook.—There is no question that almost all neurotic troubles can be improved or modified by an alkaline treatment. I find asthma, though, one of the most stubborn and most distressing troubles that we have to contend with in the whole category of neuroses. Every practitioner has come in contact, more or less, with this trouble, because we have a great deal of it in Texas; and, as my friend Dr. Menefee remarked a while ago, what will relieve the patient one time will not relieve him the next time. I have treated a great many cases, and a remedy I would use with good effect in one attack, the next time would seem to aggravate the trouble. For instance, I have given morphine hypodermically for the relief of those troubles, and one time it would relieve the patient, and another time, a little later, it would seem to produce a dyspnoea—would aggravate the difficulty. I found often, in the treatment of this case, that steaming the patient, just with hot water, throwing a blanket over him, putting a bucket beneath the blanket, with steaming water in it, gave relief almost instantaneously. It is hard to adopt any particular line of treatment in one of these asthmatic attacks that is satisfactory to me and a relief to the patient. I will say that I have had two patients get well of asthma in spite of my treatment. One a lady I know that has been well for eight years, and has not been troubled with asthma, that used to have very ugly attacks of it, and very stubborn. I have sat up with her all night trying to relieve her. Her attacks grew lighter and lighter, and finally disappeared. It has been about eight years since she has been troubled with it at all. I don't accord it to any particular treatment that was given at all: the trouble disappeared, and I cannot account for it.

Dr. Hunter.—Mr. Chairman, and gentlemen, I am very much obliged to the Society for the liberal discussion of this important subject. As to my ever claiming that every case of asthma was caused by uric acid, and that Alkalithia would cure every case, I have never done this. I was about to remark that you might just as well say that you won't have any more chills and fever after you had cured a case once with quinine. If you have a patient suffering with asthma, and can relieve that patient with Alkalithia, I don't care whether it lasts a week, or a month,

or a year, or two or three years, you have benefited the patient. Now, you have chills and fever, and break it up with quinine, and let that patient live in that same malarial district next year, and he will have chills and fever again, unless you give the same prophylactic. But, gentlemen, the great trouble with us is we don't differentiate our cases, and this is what has given the medical profession so much trouble heretofore, though anybody is able to diagnose a case of asthma when he comes into the office wheezing. The patient comes in and says, "Doctor, can't you cure this trouble for me? You have generally relieved me with a hypodermic injection of morphine or atropia or something, but can't you *cure* me?" Well, the doctor don't look to see whether he has a polypus in his nose; nine times out of ten he doesn't differentiate the case to see whether there is uric acid in the case or not, but he says, "Dr. Hunter read a paper on uric acid as the cause of asthma, and because I can't cure you with anything else, I will try Alkalithia." Probably that man has a polypus in his nose, and if he has, you can't cure him with a barrel of Alkalithia. Gentlemen, I have been practicing medicine for nearly forty years. I have treated smallpox, and nearly all the contagious and infectious diseases. I have endangered my life in all kinds of cases, riding dark nights in the rain, with my horse on a lope, when I couldn't see the road, and frequently never got a dollar for it. I have done that often; but, gentlemen, I want to say now, that I wouldn't exchange to-day that amount of good which my paper, my investigation of the uric acid principle, has done for asthma, for all the good that I may have done in cases referred to. I claim to be the first man in Texas who thoroughly investigated the uric acid theory; the first man who ever read a paper on uric acid as the cause of asthma. No, gentlemen, I wouldn't take a world of money for the good the investigation of the uric acid theory of the causation of this disease caused by this paper has and will do suffering humanity. Look at the four cases that have been reported to-day; these are in evidence. There is Dr. Momand of Dallas; that gentleman there knows him, and knows of his experience with asthma. That old gentleman had asthma for *fifty years*, and I put him on Alkalithia and he got well. I reported his case in the paper I read in Dallas three years ago. I met the doctor in Dallas the other day, at the North Texas Medical Association, and I hardly knew him. I said, "Doctor, you are looking splendidly; how about your asthma? Have you ever had any more of it?" He said, "Doctor, I have never had an attack of it since." There is a man that has not taken any Alkalithia or prophylactic after ap-

parent cure, but still, it *may* seize him again. Uric acid is like everything else, it will accumulate in the blood. You take an old beer drinker, or a heavy meat eater, and give him proper diet and drink, as Dr. Graves tells you, which is the proper way to do, and put him on Alkalithia, and you will cure him nine times out of ten; but if he goes back to his beer, his wine and his meat, he will have it again, just like the man with chills and fever, who daily lives in a malarial district. But, as I tell you, when it is caused from uric acid, we have no remedy to equal the Alkalithia. I have seen and talked with physicians all over these United States; Dr. Gaston, of Atlanta, Ga., has recently cured a case with the remedy which is being considered, You all know Dr. Gaston from reputation, if you do not know him personally. He used to translate from the Spanish journals for *Gaillard's Medical Journal*. I know a number of cases in Atlanta, and a number of cases in Augusta. I have a report of a case now from Dr. Gordy, of Augusta, Georgia, who is treasurer of his state medical society, and has been for seventeen years. He told me last summer he had reported the case to the Augusta Medical Society about two years ago; and this summer I was with him at Augusta, and learned from him that his case was seemingly permanently cured. In some cases it takes a great deal of the remedy, and in some it takes less. Dr. Weathers, of San Antonio, sent me a letter in regard to a case he treated. This case was that of a man who was a conductor on a road running out of San Antonio. He had to give him seventeen bottles before he cured him. It is now a great while since he had an attack, and is actively doing his duty as a conductor. That is the way it goes; it takes more Alkalithia in some cases than it does in others, but it must be continued until the blood becomes alkaline and remains so, then usually the asthma *is cured*, though it may perhaps again return. I am very much obliged, gentlemen, for the discussion.

